

(Re) Imagining Effective Disaster Prevention and Management for Development in Africa

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Kariuki Muigua*

Abstract

This paper critically discusses the need for effective disaster prevention and management in Africa. It argues that Africa is a continent that is highly vulnerable to natural and human-made disasters that disrupt livelihoods and draw gains achieved in socio-economic development. The paper posits that disasters are a key threat to Sustainable Development in Africa. It examines the progress made and challenges faced in disaster prevention and management in Africa. The paper further offers ideas towards effective disaster prevention and management for development in Africa.

1.0 Introduction

The term disaster refers to serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community to cope using its own resources¹. Disasters occur in various forms. For example, human-made disasters result from human errors and include industrial explosions or structure failures². In addition, natural disasters result from physical phenomena and include earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides, and forest fires³. Some disasters can also be classified as complex and include epidemics or armed

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¹ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy' Available at <https://repository.kippra.or.ke/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/559/NATIONAL%20Disaster%20Risk%20Mannagement%20POLICY%20APPROVED.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

² What Is Disaster Management? Understanding Emergencies from Prevention to Mitigation., Available at <https://publichealth.tulane.edu/blog/what-is-disaster-management/> (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

³ Ibid

conflicts⁴. Disasters in whatever form disrupt communities and can take a serious toll on people, property, economies, and the environment⁵. Most disasters often stretch a community's capacity to cope⁶. Disasters are also worsened by climate change and human-induced factors that results in more areas being affected⁷. Effective disaster prevention and management is therefore key for development.

Disaster prevention and management involves implementing strategies, policies and improved coping capacities to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disasters⁸. It has also been defined as a process of effectively preparing for and responding to disasters⁹. Disaster prevention and management involves strategically organizing resources to lessen the harm that disasters cause¹⁰. In addition, this process also involves a systematic approach to managing the responsibilities of disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery¹¹.

The United Nations notes that disasters are linked to inequalities¹². It points out that unequal access to services leaves the most vulnerable exposed to the danger of disasters; while the effects of disasters exacerbate inequalities and push the most at risk further into poverty¹³. It calls for a people-focused and action-oriented approach to disaster prevention and management that applies to the risk of small-scale and large-scale disasters caused by man-made, or natural hazards, as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks¹⁴.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy'

⁸ Ibid

⁹ What Is Disaster Management? Understanding Emergencies from Prevention to Mitigation., Op Cit

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² United Nations., 'Fighting Inequality for a Resilient Future' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/observances/disaster-reduction-day> (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

The United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁵ notes that more frequent and intense natural disasters threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades. It urges all countries to promote resilience and disaster risk reduction¹⁶. The Agenda notes that disaster prevention and management is key in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including combating poverty (SDG 1), achieving food security (SDG 2), making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (SDG 11), and combating climate change (SDG 13)¹⁷. Disaster prevention and management is therefore key for Sustainable Development.

This paper critically discusses the need for effective disaster prevention and management in Africa. It argues that Africa is a continent that is highly vulnerable to natural and human-made disasters that disrupt livelihoods and draw gains achieved in socio-economic development. The paper posits that disasters are a key threat to Sustainable Development in Africa. It examines the progress made and challenges faced in disaster prevention and management in Africa. The paper further offers ideas towards effective disaster prevention and management for development in Africa.

2.0 Impacts of Disasters on Development in Africa

Africa is a continent that is highly vulnerable to disasters¹⁸. It has been reported that natural and human-made disasters have been on the rise in the continent over the past decades¹⁹. In Africa, more people are affected by natural hazards, and economic losses incurred are rising²⁰. The impacts of disasters have become an impediment to Sustainable Development in Africa²¹.

¹⁵ United Nations General Assembly., 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1., Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Africa Union., 'Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction' Available at https://www.preventionweb.net/files/7603_AFRICAREGIONALDRRSTRATEGYfullPDF.pdf (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

Africa Union's *Agenda 2063*²² acknowledges the vulnerability of Africa to disasters. It notes that due to its geographic location and low level of technological development, Africa remains highly vulnerable to disasters²³. According to Agenda 2063, most disasters in Africa appear climate related or hydrometeorological hazards including drought, flood and windstorms²⁴. In addition, Agenda 2063 notes that less frequent hazards in Africa include pest infestation, earthquakes, landslides, wildfire and volcanic eruptions²⁵. Further, cyclones mainly affect Madagascar, Mozambique, and some of the Indian Ocean islands²⁶. Africa has also in the recent past experienced diseases outbreaks, such as Ebola, that have left a trail of heavy destruction of both life and livelihoods²⁷. The COVID-19 pandemic was also a major disease outbreak globally and in Africa which crippled African economies and upended people's lives thereby threatening Sustainable Development across all its dimensions²⁸. It has been argued that while African households have developed strong disaster capacity entrenched in their culture, these capacities, however, are challenged by outbreaks such as Ebola and COVID-19²⁹.

The capacity of African countries to effectively respond to disasters is affected by factors such poverty and slow and economic growth³⁰. Disasters result in environmental degradation, increase the number of internally displaced persons and refugees therefore affecting human lives and essential assets required for further development³¹. In addition, natural and

²² African Union., 'Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want.' Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ United Nations- Habitat., 'COVID-19 in Africa Cities: Impacts, Responses and Policies' Available at <https://unhabitat.org/covid-19-in-africa-cities-impacts-responses-and-policies> (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ East African Community., 'Disaster Risk Reduction and Management' Available at <https://www.eac.int/gender/114-sector/environment-natural-resources-management/disaster-risk-reduction> (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

³¹ Ibid

manmade disasters pose a huge threat to socio-economic development of the continent³². With increased frequency and intensity of extreme climate and severe weather events, the continent experiences the severe consequences of disasters as resources for development are diverted to finance disaster emergencies³³.

Disasters in Africa in general and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular often take a huge toll on vulnerable populations³⁴. Loss of life and livelihoods in the face of already existing challenges sets communities back many years leaving them at risk should another natural hazard occur³⁵. It has been noted that African countries and communities face many natural hazards but the major ones are drought and floods³⁶. These disasters invariably cause famine, food insecurity and poverty therefore affecting Sustainable Development in Africa³⁷. Disaster prevention and management is therefore necessary for development in Africa³⁸.

3.0 Disaster Prevention and Management in Africa: Progress and Challenges

Disaster prevention and management is a key priority for Africa. It has been noted that managing disaster risks and urban challenges is key to ensuring that Africa's development achievements are not lost when disasters hit³⁹. According to the World Bank, nearly 90 per cent of all disasters in Africa are weather and climate driven⁴⁰. It notes that by 2030, up to 118 million extremely poor people in Africa will be severely exposed

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction., 'Building Disaster Resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa' Available at <https://www.preventionweb.net/resilient-africa/home.html> (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Indigenous Knowledge in Disaster Management in Africa' Available at https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/sites/default/files/2013/07/Appendix9IndigenousBookletUNE_P.pdf (Accessed on 29/04/2024)

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ The World Bank Group., 'Building Resilience in Africa' Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disasterriskmanagement/brief/building-resilience-in-africa#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%2C%20Global%20Facility,rural%20areas%20throughout%20the%20continent.> (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

⁴⁰ Ibid

to disasters such as cyclones, drought, floods, earthquakes, extreme heat and extreme weather conditions⁴¹.

The continent continues to face evermore frequent disasters and increasing vulnerability with a devastating repercussion on the lives and livelihoods of its people⁴². It has been noted that Africa has the second highest disaster risk next to Oceania while it is the continent with the highest overall societal vulnerability with 12 of the 15 most vulnerable countries in the world being located in Africa⁴³. The risk of disasters in Africa has been evident from multiple disasters that have hit the continent in recent years including the volcanic eruption on Mount Nyiragongo in the city of Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), locust swarms and flooding in the Horn of Africa, cyclones and storms that have led to heavy rains and flooding in Southern Africa countries such as the Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe⁴⁴.

According to the African Union, Africa has become increasingly exposed to frequent and intensified threats of hazards, such as floods, droughts, cyclones, earthquakes, landslides and conflicts which are causing increased economic losses and mortalities⁴⁵. It further notes that disaster risk in Africa is multi-dimensional in nature⁴⁶. This means that the incidence and interactions between different types of hazards such as floods, droughts, cyclones, earthquakes, landslides and conflicts contribute to the overall risk profile of any given locality, country, region and entire continent⁴⁷. Effective disaster prevention and management is therefore a key goal for Africa.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Disaster Management in Africa: Challenges and Perspectives for Human Security., Available at <https://amaniafrica-et.org/disaster-management-in-africa-challenges-and-perspectives-for-human-security/> (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ African Union., 'Catalysing Risk-Informed Early Action in Africa: Investing in Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems to Strengthen Resilience to Disaster Risk' Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42530-doc-AUC_DRR_Policy_Brief_2.pdf (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

The need for effective disaster prevention and management is envisaged under the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*⁴⁸. Under this Framework, states commit to address disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience to disasters with a renewed sense of urgency within the context of Sustainable Development and poverty eradication, and to integrate, as appropriate, both disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience into policies, plans, programmes and budgets at all levels and to consider both within relevant frameworks⁴⁹. The implementation of the Sendai Framework is guided by several principles geared towards effective disaster risk reduction. These principles include state responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risk, including through international, regional, subregional, transboundary and bilateral cooperation; the obligation to share responsibilities between central governments and relevant national authorities, sectors and stakeholders, as appropriate according national circumstances and systems of governance⁵⁰; protection of persons and their property, health, livelihoods and productive assets, as well as cultural and environmental assets, while promoting and protecting all human rights, including the right to development; inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, that pays special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest⁵¹; effective coordination mechanisms within and across sectors and with relevant stakeholders at all levels⁵²; empowering of local authorities and local communities to reduce disaster risk, including through resources, incentives and decision-making responsibilities, as appropriate; effective and meaningful global partnership and the further strengthening of international cooperation; and sustainable and timely provision of support, including through finance, technology transfer and capacity building from developed countries and partners tailored to the needs and priorities of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries,

⁴⁸ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030., Available at <https://www.undrr.org/media/16176/download?startDownload=20240430> (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and African countries, as well as middle-income and other countries facing specific disaster risk challenges⁵³.

The Sendai Framework also identifies four priority actions for effective disaster prevention and management⁵⁴. These are understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction⁵⁵. The Sendai Framework is key in enhancing effective disaster prevention and management. It recognizes that the state has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local governments, the private sector and other stakeholders⁵⁶. The Framework sets out the overall objective to substantially reduce disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries⁵⁷. It is therefore necessary to implement the Sendai Framework in Africa for effective disaster prevention and management.

The African Union has also put in place policy and institutional frameworks to effectively respond to the increasing disasters confronting the continent. For example, the *Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction*⁵⁸ aims to contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development and poverty eradication by facilitating the integration of disaster risk reduction into development. The Strategy recognizes that disaster risks in Africa results from the interaction between natural, technological or conflict induced hazards and vulnerability conditions⁵⁹. It focuses on disasters arising from natural and

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction., Available at https://www.preventionweb.net/files/4038_africaregionalstrategy1.pdf (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

⁵⁹ Ibid

related human induced hazards⁶⁰. The Strategy seeks to achieve several objectives for effective disaster prevention and management in Africa. These objectives include increasing political commitment to disaster risk reduction; improving identification and assessment of disaster risks; enhancing knowledge management for disaster risk reduction; increasing public awareness of disaster risk reduction; improving governance of disaster risk reduction institutions; and integrating disaster risk reduction into emergency response management⁶¹. Implementation of this Strategy is therefore vital for effective disaster prevention and management for development in Africa. It has been noted that effective implementation of the Strategy depends on institutional arrangements and capacities as well as resources⁶². It is therefore necessary to build capacities, strengthen institutions in Africa, and ensure availability of resources for effective implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction⁶³.

The African Union Commission has further developed a *Programme of Action*⁶⁴ for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa in line with the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Programme of Action aims to strengthen synergies between the Sendai Framework and the Africa Regional Strategy for effective disaster prevention and management in Africa. The Programme of Action seeks to achieve the global outcome in Africa as outlined in the Sendai Framework which is ‘the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.’⁶⁵ It also aims to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk in Africa through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic,

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Africa In line with the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction., Available at https://www.unisdr.org/files/49455_poaforsendaiimplementationinafrica.pdf (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

⁶⁵ Ibid

structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and therefore strengthen resilience of the continent to disasters⁶⁶. It is therefore necessary to pursue the objectives of this Programme of Action and strengthen synergies between the Sendai Framework and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction for effective disaster prevention and management for development in Africa.

At a national level, the *National Disaster Risk Management Policy*⁶⁷ of Kenya acknowledges that the country faces a wide range of natural and human-induced hazards, such as, drought, floods, landslides, human and animal disease, pests, earthquakes, and urban and forest fires, that impacts on and reduces the full realization of the benefits of Vision 2030⁶⁸. It further acknowledges that disasters in Kenya are aggravated by climate change and human-induced factors that has resulted in more areas in the country being affected⁶⁹. The aim of the policy is to build a safe and disaster-resilient nation through establishment of a robust Disaster Risk Management system that contributes to and protects the achievements of Kenya's national development⁷⁰. It also seeks to substantially reduce natural and human-induced disaster risk and associated losses in social, economic and environmental assets at national and county levels through the establishment of an integrated multi-hazard Disaster Risk Management approach⁷¹. In order to achieve effective disaster prevention and management in Kenya, the Policy also seeks to mainstream Disaster Risk Management into Sustainable Development policies, strategies and plans at all levels and within and across all sectors⁷².

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy', Op Cit

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

The Policy identifies best practices for effective disaster risk management in Kenya including comprehensive disaster risk management; all hazards approach; and Subsidiarity and Tiered Response System⁷³. The principle of subsidiarity requires that functions and actions should be undertaken at the lowest or least centralized competent level possible⁷⁴. The concept of Tiered Response on the other hand suggests that disaster response is by default always handled first by the directly impacted community and families, then the local governments and organizations⁷⁵. However, when response-needs exceed local capacity, then the next highest level assumes responsibility for response up to the level of international support⁷⁶.

The Policy identifies priority areas for effective disaster prevention and management in Kenya including establishing and strengthening institutional mechanisms and capacities for Disaster Risk Management; reducing disaster risk and vulnerabilities at local, county and national levels; mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management into Sustainable Development policies, strategies and plans at all levels and within and across all sectors; enhancing resilience at the local, county, and national level to the impacts of disaster risk and climate change; and enhancing effective and coordinated disaster preparedness, prevention, response, mitigation, and recovery⁷⁷. It is necessary to actualize this Policy in order to achieve effective disaster prevention and management in Kenya for development.

There are efforts towards enacting a legislation on disaster prevention and management in Kenya. The *National Disaster Risk Management Bill*⁷⁸ aims to establish the National Disaster Risk Management Authority and County Disaster Risk Management

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy', Op Cit

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ National Disaster Risk Management Bill., Available at https://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/bills/2023/TheNationalDisasterRiskManagementBill_2023.pdf (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

Committees; and to provide a legal framework for the co-ordination of disaster risk management activities among other connected purposes⁷⁹. The Bill aims to enhance effective disaster prevention and management in Kenya by providing for a legislative framework for disaster risk management; enhancing effective and coordinated disaster preparedness, prevention, response, mitigation and recovery; reducing disaster risks and vulnerabilities at the national and county levels of government; and enhancing resilience to the impacts of disaster risks and climate change at both the national and county levels⁸⁰. It also sets out the guiding principles to disaster risk management in Kenya. These principles include a comprehensive approach to Disaster Risk Management that balances between the reduction of risk and the enhancement of community resilience, while ensuring effective response and recovery capabilities; all hazards approach in managing disasters; enhancing local disaster risk management capability as the frontline to disaster risk management; respect, ethics and professional standards; transparency and accountability; commitment in service to the people; and supporting the national government and the county government including the local communities, in disaster risk management⁸¹. The Bill also seeks to establish an institutional framework for effective disaster prevention and management in Kenya which comprises of the Intergovernmental Council on Disaster Risk Management, and the National Disaster Risk Management Authority⁸². It is imperative to fast track the enactment of this legislation in order to strengthen the legal and institutional framework for effective disaster prevention and management in Kenya.

County governments also have an important role to play in disaster prevention and management in Kenya. Pursuant to the sixth schedule to the *Constitution of Kenya*⁸³ as read together with the *Intergovernmental Relations Act*⁸⁴ disaster management functions in

⁷⁹ Ibid, Preamble

⁸⁰ Ibid, S 3

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Ibid, Part II

⁸³ Constitution of Kenya., 2010., Sixth Schedule, S 15., Government Printer, Nairobi

⁸⁴ Intergovernmental Relations Act., 2012., Government Printer, Nairobi

Kenya have been divided between the National Government and County Governments⁸⁵. The functions of the national government in disaster prevention include development and implementation of a national disaster prevention policy; capacity building and technical assistance to county governments on disaster prevention; conducting national disaster risk assessments or analyses; establishing national disaster early warning sector based systems; and carrying out national civic education and awareness creation to stakeholders⁸⁶. The functions of county governments on the other hand include alignment of county disaster prevention policy with national policy; implementation of county disaster prevention policy; capacity building and technical assistance to communities on disaster prevention; conducting county disaster risk assessments or analysis; communicating early warning disaster information to communities; and carrying out civic education and awareness to local stakeholders and communities⁸⁷. County governments have made progress towards fulfilling their obligations by enacting legislations to strengthen their disaster prevention and management capacities⁸⁸. It is necessary for county governments in Kenya to enhance their efforts towards disaster prevention and management in Kenya. It has been argued that county governments have the potential to improve disaster prevention and management in Kenya as a result of devolution which has strengthened responsive governance in Kenya⁸⁹.

Despite the efforts made towards enhancing disaster prevention and management in Africa, the continent still faces several challenges in realizing this goal. For example, it has been opined that disaster response in most African countries is extremely slow and inefficient and, by the time governments and the private sector have raised enough

⁸⁵ Legal Notice No. 86., 'Delineation of Disaster Management Function' Government Printer, Nairobi

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ See for example Tana River County Disaster Risk Management Act, 2020; Vihiga County Disaster Management Act, 2020; Mombasa County Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management Act, 2017; and the Nairobi City County Disaster and Emergency Management Act, 2015.

⁸⁹ Mutanda. N., Orindi. V., & Ochieng. K., 'Strengthening Disaster Management in Kenya' Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331063875_STRENGTHENING_DISASTER_MANAGEMENT_IN_KENYA (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

resources to respond meaningfully, the problem is usually worse, and more funding is needed⁹⁰. Further, it has been pointed out that in most cases, not only is the response to disasters is slow and inefficient but also it is largely reactive focusing on relief and immediate rehabilitation while ignoring preventive disaster reduction measures⁹¹. Inadequate early warning systems and the gap in translating early warning to early action remain critical hurdles in ensuring effective disaster prevention and management in Africa⁹². Inadequate funding also heavily affects disaster management in Africa⁹³. Further, in Kenya, effective disaster prevention and management is hindered by challenges such as inadequate institutional mechanisms and capacities including human, technical, and financial capacities; increased disaster risk and vulnerabilities at local, county and national levels; low resilience at local, county and national level to the impacts of disaster risk and climate change; and ineffective and uncoordinated disaster preparedness, prevention, response, mitigation and recovery⁹⁴. It is necessary to address these challenges at the continental, regional, and national levels in order to foster effective disaster prevention and management for development in Africa.

4.0 Towards Effective Disaster Prevention and Management in Africa

In order to foster effective disaster management and prevention in Africa, it is necessary to strengthen disaster early warning and preparedness⁹⁵. The African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction notes that prospective assessment of the risk of disasters to development and the effect of development interventions on disasters, effective early warning of impending risks, and systematic assessment of disaster losses are particularly important in helping communities and countries to determine and understand the actions which they may take in order to reduce the impact of potential and existing risks⁹⁶. Effectively strengthening early warning and preparedness towards disasters

⁹⁰ Disaster Management in Africa: Challenges and Perspectives for Human Security., Op Cit

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy'., Op Cit

⁹⁵ Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction., Op Cit

⁹⁶ Ibid

especially through human-centered and participatory approaches can help identify available strengths and capacities that can reduce disaster risks⁹⁷. It has been noted that African countries need to establish command centers which operate on a twenty four hour basis to closely monitor and timeously issue early warning alerts on impending natural disasters for effective responses⁹⁸. The United Nations notes that strengthening multi-hazard early warning systems that lead to early action is vital in disaster prevention and management by reducing risk and building resilience⁹⁹. It is therefore necessary to establish functional early warning systems in Africa for effective disaster prevention and management.

In addition, there is need for proactive Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa¹⁰⁰. The concept and practice Disaster Risk Reduction entails reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causal factors of disasters including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and environment and improved preparedness for adverse events¹⁰¹. This idea aims at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of Sustainable Development¹⁰². Some of the key approaches towards this end include enhanced financial support for the vulnerable, skills and technology transfer, as well as through investment in community-based risk reduction initiatives¹⁰³. It is therefore necessary for African countries to facilitate the development, implementation and

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Disaster Management in Africa: Challenges and Perspectives for Human Security., Op Cit

⁹⁹ United Nations., 'United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)' Available at <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/content/united-nations-office-disaster-risk-reduction-undrr> (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

¹⁰⁰ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy', Op Cit

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² International Organization for Migration., 'Taking Sendai Forward: IOM Strategic Work Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction & Resilience' Available at https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our_work/DOE/humanitarian_emergencies/Disaster-Risk-Reduction-Strategic-Action-Plan.pdf (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

¹⁰³ Ibid

maintenance of disaster risk reduction strategies that will result in resilient areas, communities, households and individuals¹⁰⁴. It is also essential to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives with development plans¹⁰⁵.

Further, it is imperative to embrace the concept of decentralization and the participation of all stakeholders at all levels including local levels for effective disaster prevention and management¹⁰⁶. The Sendai Framework acknowledges that while the enabling, guiding and coordinating role of national and federal state governments remain essential, it is necessary to empower local authorities and local communities to reduce disaster risk, including through resources, incentives and decision-making responsibilities, as appropriate¹⁰⁷. It further notes that while the drivers of disaster risk may be local, national, regional or global in scope, disaster risks have local and specific characteristics that must be understood for the determination of measures to reduce disaster risk¹⁰⁸. Therefore, for effective disaster prevention and management in Africa, there is need to enhance collaboration among people at the local level through approaches such as disseminating disaster risk information through the involvement of community-based organizations and nongovernmental organizations¹⁰⁹. Embracing decentralized approaches towards disaster prevention and management can ensure participation of all stakeholders and the formulation of effective remedies tailored to the specific needs of localities¹¹⁰.

Harnessing indigenous knowledge is also fundamental for effective disaster prevention and management in Africa¹¹¹. It has been noted that African communities tackle disasters at local levels often utilizing traditional coping mechanisms based on local knowledge

¹⁰⁴ Republic of Kenya, 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy', Op Cit

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030., Op Cit

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction., Op Cit

and experience¹¹². Local community experience provides the basis for people to improve their knowledge and adopt more effective disaster risk reduction approaches¹¹³. The Sendai Framework acknowledges that traditional knowledge is key for disaster prevention and management¹¹⁴. It seeks to ensure the use of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices, as appropriate, to complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and the development and implementation of policies, strategies, plans and programmes of specific sectors, with a cross-sectoral approach, which should be tailored to localities¹¹⁵. The National Disaster Risk Management Policy of Kenya also seeks to promote the use of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices, as appropriate; to complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk management to apply relevant methodologies and models to assess disaster risks, vulnerabilities and exposure to all hazards¹¹⁶. Indigenous knowledge is therefore key for effective disaster prevention and management in Africa. Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning¹¹⁷. Indigenous communities in Africa have for many decades faced many natural hazards including drought and floods that invariably cause famine, food insecurity and poverty¹¹⁸. However, these communities have devised a variety of measures such as growing drought-resistant and early-maturing indigenous crop varieties, gathering wild fruits and vegetables, wetlands cultivation, livestock diversifying and splitting which have enabled them to survive such disasters with little or no support from the outside world¹¹⁹. It is therefore necessary to harness indigenous knowledge in Africa for effective disaster prevention and management.

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030., Op Cit

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy', Op Cit

¹¹⁷ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030., Op Cit

¹¹⁸ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Indigenous Knowledge in Disaster Management in Africa' Op Cit

¹¹⁹ Ibid

Finally, it is vital to combat climate change in Africa¹²⁰. Climate change increases the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as severe drought, floods and tropical cyclones which trigger destabilizing situations and cause extensive loss of livelihoods and property in many African countries, reversing development gains, pushing more families into poverty¹²¹. Climate change therefore has severe implications for the continent's food security, livelihoods, and economic growth¹²². It has been noted that with increased frequency and intensity of extreme climate and severe weather events, Africa experiences the severe consequences of disasters as resources for development are diverted to finance disaster emergencies¹²³. Climate change increases the severity of disasters such as droughts and floods in Africa undermining development¹²⁴. African countries should therefore enhance climate action by implementing efficient mitigation and adaptation strategies for effective disaster prevention and management¹²⁵.

5.0 Conclusion

Africa is highly vulnerable to disasters¹²⁶. The continent continues to face disasters such as drought and floods which cause famine, food insecurity and poverty therefore affecting Sustainable Development¹²⁷. Effective disaster prevention and management is key to ensuring that Africa's development achievements are not lost when disasters hit¹²⁸. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction¹²⁹; the Africa Regional Strategy for

¹²⁰ African Development Bank Group., 'International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction - Why Climate Insurance Matters' Available at <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/international-day-disaster-risk-reduction-why-climate-insurance-matters-65010> (Accessed on 30/04/2024)

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ East African Community., 'Disaster Risk Reduction and Management' Op Cit

¹²⁴ African Development Bank Group., 'International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction - Why Climate Insurance Matters' Op Cit

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Africa Union., 'Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction' Op Cit

¹²⁷ United Nations Environment Programme., 'Indigenous Knowledge in Disaster Management in Africa' Op Cit

¹²⁸ The World Bank Group., 'Building Resilience in Africa' Op Cit

¹²⁹ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030., Op Cit

Disaster Risk Reduction¹³⁰; and the National Disaster Risk Management Policy of Kenya¹³¹ are some of the key instruments adopted at the global, continental, and national levels respectively for effective disaster prevention and management. However, effective disaster prevention and management in Africa is hindered by factors such as inadequate early warning systems, inadequate institutional mechanism and capacities including human, technical, and financial capacities, and ineffective and uncoordinated disaster preparedness, prevention, response, mitigation and recovery¹³². It is necessary to address these challenges in order to foster effective disaster prevention and management for development in Africa. This can be achieved by strengthening disaster early warning and preparedness¹³³; fostering proactive Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa¹³⁴; embracing the concept of decentralization and the participation of all stakeholders at all levels including local levels for effective disaster prevention and management¹³⁵; harnessing indigenous knowledge on disaster prevention and management¹³⁶; and combating climate change in Africa¹³⁷. Effective disaster prevention and management for development in Africa is an achievable reality that needs to be fast tracked.

¹³⁰ Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction., Op Cit

¹³¹ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy', Op Cit

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction., Op Cit

¹³⁴ Republic of Kenya., 'National Disaster Risk Management Policy', Op Cit

¹³⁵ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030., Op Cit

¹³⁶ Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction., Op Cit

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